

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 EB-08 TRSE-00
/095 W

-----301245Z 053029 /44

R 291431Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9713
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, UNDP, BE
SUBJECT: BELGIAN VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF UNDP

REF: STATE 86320

1. SUMMARY: BELGIUM IS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE UNDP.
A RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL TO WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN BELIEVES
THAT THE ORGANIZATION IS OFTEN UNDERRATED AND DOES NOT
REQUIRE MAJOR REFORM. ATTENTION WILL NEED TO BE GIVEN
TO SEVERAL AREAS OF WEAKNESS, HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY IN
DEVELOPING MORE STABLE FINANCING PROCEDURES TO PERMIT
EFFECTIVE PROJECT PLANNING OVER THE MEDIUM TERM. END SUMMARY.

2. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE QUESTIONS RAISED REFTTEL
WITH MME. SUSANNE VERVALCKE, DIRECTOR OF MULTILATERAL
PROGRAMS IN THE BELGIAN AGENCY FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE
(AGCD). MME. VERVALCKE HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE
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UNDP FOR THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS THROUGH HER WORK IN
THE AGCD. SHE IS NORMALLY THE RANKING BELGIAN
REPRESENTATIVE ON THE GOVERNING COUNCIL. HER VIEWS
CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE INSTRUMENTAL IN FORMULATING
BELGIUM'S RESPONSE TO THE MORSE STUDY.

3. MME. VERVALCKE SAID THAT BELGIUM HAS BEEN AND WILL

CONTINUE TO BE A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE UNDP IN ITS PRESENT FORM OR SOMETHING QUITE CLOSE TO IT. IT IS THE ONLY WORLDWIDE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATION, SHE NOTED, AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION FOR THE BELGIANS. ITS ADMINISTRATION IS BETTER THAN REPUTED AND LESS POLITICIZED THAN IN MANY OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES. IF IT CANNOT POINT TO GREAT SUCCESSES OR BREAKTHROUGHS, THE UNDP HAS ALSO AVOIDED EGREGIOUS ERRORS OR SCANDAL. THERE HAVE BEEN GROWING INCREASES IN DONOR COUNTRY CONTRIBUTIONS IN RECENT YEARS, WHICH IN HER VIEW REPRESENT A CERTAIN VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE ORGANIZATION. (BELGIUM'S CONTRIBUTION, INCIDENTALLY, WILL PROBABLY GROW 14 PERCENT IN 1978, SHE SAID.)

4. THAT IS NOT TO SAY THERE ARE NOT PROBLEMS. MME. VERVALCKE AGREES WITH THE LIST OF ISSUES CITED PARA 5 REFTEL (EXCEPT FOR 5(A)--WHERE SHE BELIEVES THAT EVEN IF ONE COULD BE FRANK ABOUT THEM, LESSONS DERIVED FROM ONE PROJECT ARE SELDOM APPLICABLE TO OTHERS BECAUSE OF DIFFERING CIRCUMSTANCES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES). SHE ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE PROLIFERATION OF OTHER UN FUNDS HAVE HELPED WEAKEN THE UNDP AND BLUR ITS ROLE. IN HER VIEW, CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO GROUPING THESE FUNDS UNDER THE UNDP UNBRELLA.

5. MME. VERVALCKE ALSO MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:
(A) MANY OF UNDP'S PROBLEMS, E.G. SLOW IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS, PAPERWORK, DIFFICULTIES IN RECRUITING, ARE NOT PECULIAR TO IT. THEY ARE ENDEMIC TO ALL INTERNATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND NATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

(B) THE GOVERNING COUNCIL SHOULD RETAIN ITS CHARACTER AS A BODY OF WORKING-LEVEL EXPERTS. SHE BELIEVES STRONGLY THAT ITS REPRESENTATION SHOULD NOT RPT NOT BE RAISED TO THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL; TO DO SO WOULD BE TO POLITICIZE THE UNDP UNDULY. GC MEETINGS SHOULD BE HELD ONLY ONCE A YEAR. THIS MIGHT NECESSITATE SOME SORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE OR NEW CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SESSIONS--BUT SUCH CONSULTATIONS SHOULD BE CARRIED ON BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS BASED IN CAPITALS AND NOT RPT NOT BE ALLOWED TO DEVOLVE ON PERMANENT DELEGATIONS IN NEW YORK OR GENEVA. AS FOR PAPER WORK, THE WORST OFFENDERS ARE THE DONOR COUNTRIES. A COORDINATED EFFORT AMONG THEM TO REDUCE IT WOULD BE THE BEST REMEDY.

(C) THE DONOR COUNTRIES SHOULD STEP UP PRESSURE ON THE OPEC COUNTRIES TO INCREASE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS. WE SHOULD REALIZE, HOWEVER, THAT MORE OPEC MONEY WILL PROBABLY MEAN MORE PRESSURE TO APPLY POLITICAL CRITERIA,

PARTICULARLY ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES, IN DIRECTING UNDP ACTIVITIES.

(D) IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THE UNDP TO FOCUS MUCH MORE ATTENTION ON THE LEAST-DEVELOPED THAN AT PRESENT. MOST DONORS DO NOT HAVE STRONG INTERESTS IN THE LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. AT THE SAME TIME, UNDP SHOULD GENERALLY AVOID GETTING INTO THE EQUIPMENT-FINANCING BUSINESS IN THE MORE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. COST-REIMBURSABLE OPERATIONS IN SUCH LDCS CAN BE EXPANDED, AS LONG AS THE UNDP GUARDS ITS IDENTITY AS PRIMARILY A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND STUDIES AGENCY.

(E) THE MAJOR PROBLEM FOR UNDP IN THE YEARS AHEAD IS GOING TO BE TO FIND A WAY TO GIVE THE ADMINISTRATOR A 3-5 YEAR FUNDING LEVEL HE CAN COUNT ON WHILE PRESERVING THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF CONTRIBUTIONS. DONOR COUNTRIES MUST DEVELOP MEANS THROUGH THEIR OWN BUDGET PROCESSES TO ENSURE THAT UNDP HAS A FINANCIAL FLOOR WOVER THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEDIUM TERM WHILE NOT PERMITTING THIS FLOOR TO BECOME A CEILING. NEITHER CAN DONORS ACCEPT AN INFLEXIBLE FORMULA ON THE SWEDISH MODEL. MME. VERVALCKE BELIEVES THAT THIS ISSUE SHOULD BE CENTRAL TO THE GC DISCUSSIONS THIS SUMMER. RENNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, REORGANIZATIONS
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BRUSSE04325
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770152-0123
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977046/aaaaaeqk.tel
Line Count: 144
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c03eb2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 86320
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2814286
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BELGIAN VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF UNDP
TAGS: EAID, BE, UNDP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c03eb2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009